AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-18, and 23-24 without prejudice or disclaimer. Please add new claims 25-38 as presented below.

1-18. (Cancelled)

19. (Original) A method of improving a paved surface comprising the steps of:

applying a layer of liquefied asphalt on a surface;

applying a mat over the liquefied asphalt, the mat comprising a nonwoven mat produced from fibers having a melting point above about 330°F (177°C) selected from the group consisting of mineral fibers, polymer fibers, and mixtures thereof, the liquefied asphalt penetrating and soaking the mat; and

applying a layer of paving material over the mat.

20. (Original) A method according to claim 19 wherein the mat has a load-elongation behavior such that when the mat is subject to tensile stress, the mat achieves at least 90% of its ultimate load at an elongation not greater than 5% of the specimen length in the direction of applied stress.

21. (Currently Amended) A [[mat]] method according to claim 19 wherein the mat is resistant to shrinkage such that when a 4 ounce (113.4 gram) sample of the mat is held in an oven at 325°F (163°C) for one minute, the area of the mat is reduced to not less than about 90% of its original area.

22. (Currently Amended) A [[mat]] method according to claim 19 wherein the fibers have a melting point of at least about 350°F (177°C).

23-24. (Cancelled)

25. (New) The method of claim 19 wherein substantially all the fibers are polymer fibers.

26. (New) The method of claim 25 wherein the polymer fibers have a melting point of at least about 330°F (177°C).

27. (New) The method of claim 19 wherein the polymer fibers have a melting point of at least about 330°F (177°C).

28. (New) The method of claim 19 including the step of adding a nonstick layer on a major surface of the mat after the mat is applied over the liquefied asphalt.

29. (New) The method of claim 28, the nonstick layer comprises a polymer layer that melts when hot paving material is applied, the polymer layer having a nonstick coating on its outer surface.

30. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the mat further comprises a rubbery binder.

31. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the mat further comprises natural fibers.

32. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the mat further comprises carbon fibers.

33. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the mat further comprises a binder comprising one of the group consisting of a styrene-butadiene rubber, styrene-butadiene-styrene rubber, acrylic copolymers, methylmethacrylate/butyl acrylate, butylacrylate acrylonitrile, styrene acrylate, vinyl acetate/ethylene, vinyl chloride/ethylene, and other polymers having a glass transition temperature below about 20°C.

34. (New) The method of claim 33, wherein the mat fibers comprise 100% mineral fibers.

35. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein prior to applying the mat to the asphalt, further comprising the steps of contacting the mat fibers with a meltable material in the form of finely ground particles or fibers, melting the material such that it surrounds the fibers, and then allowing the material to solidify to function as a binder for the mat.

36. (New) The method according to claim 35 wherein the material is a thermoplastic polymer.

37. (New) The method of claim 19, wherein the mat further comprises a second layer attached to the nonwoven mat, the second layer comprising a woven glass fiber mat or grid.

38. (New) The method according to claim 37wherein the second layer comprises a plurality of bundles of continuous glass fibers oriented along an X direction relative to the first layer, and a plurality of bundles of continuous glass fibers oriented along a Y direction relative to the first layer.